

SHABBAT THE VOICE OF LASHEM BNEI AKIVA UK THE MOST WIDELY DISTRIBUTED YOUTH TORAH PERIODICAL IN THE UK



JEMMA SILVERT | BOGERET DVAR TORAH

In this week's Parsha, we read about Bnei Yisrael finally leaving Egypt. Of course, after how-ever-many seder nights, we're all pretty familiar with the story: the ten plagues get a bit much for Pharaoh; he finally says we can go; we bake some questionable bread, and we get on our way. At this point, Pharaoh suddenly changes his mind, chases after us, and eventually corners Bnei Yisrael at the Red Sea. Parshat Beshalach spans from this departure of Mitzrayim, through the splitting of the sea, through Moshe hitting the rock, through manna falling from the skies, and right the way to Yehoshua raising his hands to enable us to defeat the Amalekites in battle – quite a lot of storyline for just one parsha!

Personally, I've always found it interesting how the Torah is divided into parshiyot. How was it decided, all those years ago, that this little space in the text should mark the place where we finish reading one week, and start reading the next? For me, I think the answer lies in the beginning and end of each parsha. The first sentence we read sets the stage for the entire portion (and gives it its name!), whilst the last sentence dictates our closing impression, our memory of what we have just read. Sentences of such significance hold their place for a reason.

וְהָיָה בְשִׁלַּח פְּרָעָה אֶת־הָעָם וּלְאֹנֶתָם אֲלֵהֶם
דֶּרֶךְ אֲרָץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי קָרוֹב הוּא כִּי אָמַר אֲלֵהֶם כֹּה
יֵנָחֵם הָעָם בְּרֵאתָם מִלְחָמָה וְשָׁבוּ מִצְרַיִם׃

This is the first passuk we read this week, stating that when Pharaoh let Bnei Yisrael go, Hashem didn't lead us by the land of the Philistines, even though this route was shorter. This is because God didn't want us to see a war there, reconsider, and return to Egypt. To me, this seems strange. We know from the next passuk that Bnei Yisrael were armed and ready for war, so Hashem's navigational decision can't have been based on this. Rather, it seems Hashem wanted to avoid us reacting to the sight of war, and thinking that we'd have been better off

staying in Egypt. This is the strange bit. Surely no person who has been enslaved for so long and suffered so immensely at the hands of the Egyptians would actually consider going back there! Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski provides us with some helpful insight, recently supported by the work of Israeli-American psychologist, Professor Daniel Kahneman. People's memories are unreliable, impulsive at best. We remember things primarily based on how they ended, often regardless of what they were like for the vast majority of their duration. The day we left Egypt was a happy one; the Egyptians gave us jewels, Pharaoh even asked for Moshe's blessing (Shemot 12:32-36)! Here, Hashem is showing a complete awareness of the frailty of memory. He is concerned we might remember our time in Mitzrayim with greater fondness than is warranted, so God protects us by trying to avoid unnecessary conflict and by showering us with miracles throughout our journey.

However, the last passuk of Beshalach, ends by stating that there shall be a war against Amalek from generation to generation. Again, this draws on the importance of memory. Sure, bad things happen to us throughout our history, and we must remember that – but it is due to the memory of those before us that we are able to pass our story from generation to generation, that we are able to continue. At the beginning of the parsha, Hashem guides us away from war; at the end, God informs us that God will not always do so. The message is this: we must try not to let ourselves become deluded, our memory to become clouded; we must remember the bad just as clearly as we remember good, the beginning just as vividly as the end. It is through this that we experience the world in its totality, connect most to those who came before us, and give the best hope to those who come after us.

The Bill is Not Yet Paid

Rav Aharon Herskovitz | Rav Shaliach

After Bnei Yisrael cross the sea and the Egyptians are drowned in it, we are told ויסע ירמסע "And Moshe travelled Bnei Yisrael from Yam Suf." (Shemot 15:22) In other words, that he needed to force them to continue their journey. Why was there a need for Moshe's strict discipline at this point?

The Midrash Rabbah (Shemot 24:2) has a fascinating comment on this verse:

"Rabbi Yehuda said "Yisrael at that point said "Did not Hashem take us out for five things alone? One- to give us the spoils of the Egyptians. Two- to have us ride on the clouds of glory. Three- to split the sea for us. Four- to avenge us upon the Egyptians. Five- so that we might recite a song to God. Now that God has given us the spoils of the Egyptians, put us on the clouds of glory, split the sea for us, avenged us upon the Egyptians and we have said a song to him, let us return to Egypt! Moshe said to them "Hashem has told me "As you see the Egyptians today, you will no longer see them again." They said "They're already dead! Let's return to Egypt!" He said "Let us go and pay the bill, for Hashem has told me "When you take this nation out of Egypt you will serve God on this mountain."

Bnei Yisrael's feeling is understandable. At the stage in which they were, their main goal was the ending of the physical and spiritual subjugation to which the Egyptians had subjected them. Now, looking left and right and seeing their fallen masters everywhere, they said "Great! Job well done! Everything is better now!" Not only had the terrible state in which they'd found themselves been removed, but it had been reversed! The masters are dead we are now the masters.

Moshe's response is "Let's continue, the story is not over. We must continue to the next stage and go to Har Sinai."

This Midrash showcases two important points regarding Moshe's leadership. The first point is his ability to encourage those he leads to look beyond the here and now, to not think inside of the box. The reality in which Bnei Yisrael have been living is as slaves of masters in Egypt. For them, the opposite of the current situation is just no longer being slaves to those masters. But everything else can continue as usual: instead of going to work at the slave yards, we'll find some work for ourselves. But we'll still be in Goshen, we'll still live fairly similar lives to those we've had before. Any other reality is simply unfathomable at this point. Moshe at this stage tells Bnei Yisrael: "No, the job is not done. There is more yet to come." He encourages them (and yes, sometimes pushes them forcefully) to think bigger, to see that instead of just removing from them the negative state of being slaves to Pharaoh, they can, should

"In our own lives and in our interactions with others, we must remember both lessons of Moshe: to think big, to realise that the final goal may be much bigger and grander than we'd first imagined, but also to realise that if we push too hard at any point, we may lose it all"

and will be attaining the positive status of being servants to Hashem ("you shall serve God on this mountain").

But that's not all that the midrash teaches us of Moshe's leadership. Why doesn't the Midrash record here Moshe speaking bombastically of entering the Land of Israel, inheriting it and building a home for Hashem, themes that arise from the Shirat HaYam? Why does he suffice with mentioning that "the bill has not yet been paid", and encourage them to get to Har Sinai?

I believe the reason is that together with Moshe's ability and emphasis on pushing Bnei Yisrael to think bigger, he also is cognisant of their current state. If he speaks in too

grandiose terms, of visions far in the future, he may scare them off at the state in which they're in. Instead, he pushes them slightly, but not too much. "Let's keep going. Just a bit further." Although Moshe is aware of (and has also told Bnei Yisrael about) the continued journey, now is not the time to bring it up.

Both in our own lives and in our interactions with others, we must remember both lessons of Moshe: to think big, to realise that the final goal may be much bigger and grander than we'd first imagined, but also to realise that if we push too hard at any point, we may lose it all. Shabbat Shalom!

Dvar Halacha: Weekly Question

Have a question? Please email rav@bauk.org or call Rav Aharon at 07976642135.

QUESTION ASKED AT NUMEROUS LUNCH AND LEARNS: WAIT, AM I SUPPOSED TO WASH AND MAKE HAMOTZI ON THIS PIZZA?

ANSWER: The Gemara in Brachot (42a) concludes that only if one has established a meal (kove'ah seudah) on pat haba'ah bikisnin (lit. bread that comes in pockets¹), would one say hamotzi and birkat hamazon on it. If there is no meal established, a mezonot would be recited instead. There is a reported ruling of Rav Moshe Feinstein that pizza is considered pat haba'ah bikisnin and many therefore have a practice to distinguish between the number of slices being consumed (with one slice being considered not kviat seudah and requiring only a mezonot). However, according to the Mishna Berurah's understanding (168:94) of

the Shulchan Aruch's psak (168:17), if a food is normally eaten as a meal-type food, one would be required to make hamotzi and say birkat hamazon even if they were not eating it as a meal. In other words, if pizza is normally eaten as a meal, one would be required to say birkat hamazon even if they are currently merely snacking on it. A USDA study published in 2014 (<http://bit.ly/USDAPizzaStudy>) showed that around 90% of pizza is eaten as a meal. For this reason, many poskim (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Herschel Shachter and others) believe that one should recite a hamotzi and birkat hamazon on any amount of pizza, similar to regular bread.

¹Though there are three interpretations in the Rishonim for this phrase (all brought in the Shulchan Aruch 168:7) and the issue deserves a fuller discussion at another point.

Community Updates

RABBI JOSH ZAITCHEK, Mizrahi UK, visited Bogrim in BIRMINGHAM on Monday for a fascinating talk and discussion about Mental Health. ELI GORDON, BOGER, wrote: It was an inspiring and eye-opening talk that had us thinking about the underlying issues behind poor Mental Health. We discussed the problem of it being a taboo subject in some sections of society and how that can lead to exacerbating negative and harmful effects on people. To combat the taboo we agreed that more discussion can help get the problem out there and make people more comfortable talking about it and getting the necessary help.



Continued on back page.

MILL HILL BNEI AKIVA's Ha'irgun was this past Shabbat. JASON LIPOWICZ, ROSH MILL HILL wrote: Last Shabbat was a huge success. We started off bringing Shabbat in with an amazing Kabbalat Shabbat service, with lots of singing and dancing. This led in to our Family Friday Night Dinner for over 85 parents, children, madrichim and bogrim. The ruach was incredible and we were very lucky to be joined by RAV SHALIACH AHARON HERSHKOVITZ who spoke about moving to UK and linking to the parasha.

Shabbat morning was packed full of activities, more eating and more singing. After a youth-led davening in the main shul, lunch was catered for 50 people and the energy and enthusiasm of all the chanichim was amazing. The chanichim learnt some great kriyot with this year's winner being Ma'alot with "Havana" and "The Sound of Silence". To end an incredible Shabbat, we had seudah followed by Havdallah. Last but certainly not least was our after Shabbat tochnit - nearly 40 chanichim in years 7+ were treated to an action-packed evening playing laser tag in Hemel Hemsptead. THANKS TO ALL THE MADRICHIM IN MILL HILL and the BOGRIM FROM BNEI AKIVA for making our Shabbat Ha'irgun so special this year, and looking forward to the rest of sviva this year.

Behatzlacha and Yasher Koach to LEEDS BNEI AKIVA and FINCHLEY BNEI AKIVA who have their Shabbatot Irgun this week.

Bnei Akiva's BET MIDRASH program restarted this week. In LONDON Bogrim led Chaburot for Chanichim and the Rav Shaliach, Rav Aharon gave a shiur for Bogrim on the topic of 'The Nature of Kiddush'. (This was livestreamed on the Rav Shaliach Facebook page - make sure to follow it to watch, 19:00 every Wednesday). In MANCHESTER one of our Northern Shlichim, Maayan, led a women's Chabura for Sixth Formers and Bogrim on the topic of "Women in Tanach and Judaism".

ANOUSHKA GOLDMAN, ROSH SALFORD, wrote that: This week in Salford Sviva we started a



series of Shiurim from our amazing Shaliach Ma'ayan. The series will be on a woman's "place" in Judaism, we had a great turnout for our first week and the shiur itself took us right back to the beginning - פרק בראשית, איש ואישה, the differences, similarities and the spiritual and physical evolution of each up to present day. We explored Rav Soloveitchik's idea about man and woman being one whole being and the two different pesukim that have the creation of Adam (man) is mentioned in and how many different ways this can be interpreted by the mefarshim.

We're also excited to see that Bogrim have started up a Bnei Akiva BET MIDRASH in LEEDS. This will be starting on Wednesday 31st Jan at 18:15 in the Hillel Beit Knesset with a Chabura on Sefer Shoftim followed by watching the Rav Shaliach's live-stream. If you would like to attend any of these programs or if you're a parent and would like your child to attend PLEASE CONTACT eli@bauk.org.

This past Thursday the RAV and RABBANIT SHALIACH held a thank-you dinner in their home for the SENIOR TZEVEI from Winter Machane 5778. RABBANIT SHIRA wrote that: The evening was really fun with yummy food, and it was a really nice chance to show the SENIOR TZEVEI how much they are appreciated. Hakarat haTov is an important value for Bnei Akiva to embody. We look forward to many more similar meals!